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EXTRAPOLATION :
A SCIENCE - FICTION
NEWSLETTER

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The Newsletter of the Conference on Science-Fiction of the MLA is published in the Department of English at The College of Wooster; all correspondence should be sent to that address.

From the Launching Pad.

The response to the first issue of Extrapolation has been most gratifying. Over ninety copies have been mailed thus far, with requests still coming in.

This issue features two articles -- by Hillegas and Emmons -- derived from the discussion at the Conference in Chicago. We hope to include articles from Hamilton and Wilson in the fall. With this issue, too, begins the bibliography of secondary materials dealing with science fiction. Although it may not again be the featured bibliography, we plan to add to it each issue until it includes not only articles from magazines (which will probably make up its bulk) but also books, dissertations, and introductions to anthologies. Also new is "The Countdown"; we may appear too seldom for a regular book review feature, but we will include it at least once a year.

Sackett's item exploring the possibility of an index motif for science fiction grew out of the informal discussion in J. O. Bailey's room after the Conference. It initiates what we hope will become a regular "Notes and Queries" section, for Extrapolation provides the natural medium not only for exchanging ideas but also for obtaining information pertinent to one's own projects. (For example, does any one know of a 'Martian' or other alien who was completely non-human before Wells introduced the device in The War of the Worlds?)

S. J. Sackett will be the chairman of next year's Conference at Philadelphia. Further information can now be obtained from him.

Bibliographies for next year's issues are now underway. They include projects on Jules Verne and H. P. Lovecraft as well as a check-list of reverse utopias and a check-list of British science fiction titles around the turn of the century. Other projects immediately suggest themselves: Rider Haggard, Olaf Stapledon, Ray Bradbury. When such bibliographies and check-lists are published, interested scholars will have the materials for the beginning of a history of science fiction. Such projects as are appropriate to Extrapolation can be completed only with your help.

Incidentally, the pagination will be continuous through each volume. And each volume will include those numbers published during a given academic year. (We reached this decision in an elevator in Chicago when we learned that Extrapolation will be included in the PMLA Bibliography.) At least two issues, May and November, will be published each year; perhaps next year we might expand to three if interest warrants it.

Regrettably, this will be the last free issue. Beginning in the fall, Extrapolation will be sent only to subscribers. Cost will be \$1.00 a year. In September we will undertake a subscription campaign.

Science Fiction and the Idea of Progress

Mark R. Hillegas

I believe that we would all agree that science fiction has permanent value only when it says something important about man and his life. But many critics would reply that science fiction has little indeed to say about the fundamental truths of the human heart, that science fiction, applying Henry Myers' definition of literature, does not "inform us of the resources of the human spirit," that science fiction does not "convince us that the inner world of the human spirit is as boundless and wonderful as the outer world of the seven seas and starry heavens," and that science fiction does not "indicate that the moral law is as important as the laws of thermodynamics." These critics would offer in support of their accusations the fact that science fiction has often been defective in characterization, though we could easily discover some outstanding exceptions: Cavor in The First Men in the Moon, Ransom in C. S. Lewis's cosmic trilogy, or Stapledon's Odd John are as real people as we are likely to find anywhere in fiction. These critics would further state that most science fiction appeals to what T. S. Eliot, in discussing Edgar Poe, calls the pre-adolescent mentality: "the intellect of a highly gifted young person before puberty." The objects of delight for the pre-adolescent mentality which Eliot cites, "the wonders of nature and of mechanics and of the supernatural," "puzzles," and "wild flights of speculation," are admittedly often enjoyed by science fiction readers.

But while agreeing that most of this criticism is just and merited, I believe that a great deal of science fiction does have lasting value because it presents imaginatively and sometimes comments intelligently upon a basic element in our culture, the idea of progress.

The idea of progress, born in the eighteenth century, as Carl Becker remarks, out of "faith in the goodness of man" and the "efficacy of the conscious reason to create an earthly Utopia," flourished into the nineteenth century, where it was firmly fixed in its modern form as a result of the tremendous scientific and technological advances that completely altered the conditions of human life. "The common man," Becker writes, "before whose eyes the marvels of science and invention were constantly displayed, noted the unprecedented increase in wealth, the growth of cities, the new and improved methods of transportation and communication, the greater security from disease and death, and all the conveniences of domestic life unknown to previous generations, and accepted the doctrine of progress without question: the world was obviously better than it had been, obviously would be better than it was." And this simple idea of progress has been with us to the present day.

The same vague idea of an undefined better and better has also been basic to much of science fiction since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Such optimism, for example, permeates Jules Verne's romances. Such optimism, too, is present in many "science plus socialism" Utopias written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Less obvious but nevertheless real is the optimism which pervades modern science fiction adventure stories. In many space operas, for example, the equating of science with magic is a good indication of substantial popular faith in what science can do. And in a more sophisticated story like Campbell's classic "Who Goes There?" the idea of progress is also implicit. In this story of how men on an Antarctic expedition repel the invasion of a "Thing" from a world far more advanced than Earth, there are two underlying assumptions: first, that this is a cause and effect universe, the principles of which can be discovered by its intelligent inhabitants; and second, that the discovery of these principles by men, only a matter of time, will bring Earth to the level of science and technology of the extraterrestrial invader.

But a much more important comment on the idea of progress is contained in that science fiction which says that science and technology will not necessarily make the world better. Although there seem to be almost as many different opinions about the effects of scientific and technological advance on man and human society as there are science fiction writers, one can, nevertheless, see two general forms of criticism of the idea of progress.

The first criticism is that man, in Philip Wylie's words, "has failed to develop (by the same methods of integrity and painful, slow empiricism) a science of himself and his motives adequate to match his objective science." This theme is present, for example, in Arthur Clarke's Childhood's End. Our world is on the way to blowing itself to pieces when the Overlords arrive to bring peace and security in order to prepare the human race for its next stage of development. A state of peace and security is something which man himself cannot achieve-- it requires a superior understanding of human nature, a superior science of man and his motives. Only the Overlords have the wisdom to keep man from unleashing forces which will destroy life on his planet.

The second criticism is that man does have a science of himself and his motives to match his objective science, but it is a science which has resulted in the quantification of human problems. This comment upon the idea of progress can be found most notably in the reverse Utopias, the "Brave New Worlds." In these works "objective science" and "the science of man and his motives" have been combined to produce worlds which materially are better. The only trouble is that such worlds are nightmares in which to live, mainly because they have reduced human beings to mere machines.

Perhaps the most interesting recent example of a reverse Utopia which attacks current tendencies towards the quantification of human problems is Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano (Utopia 14). In

the not-too-distant future, after World War III, America has solved the problems of production and distribution. All people, even the lowest of citizens, have an abundance of physical comforts, and there is complete economic security. This wealth and stability is the result of a Second Industrial Revolution, in which automation has replaced the human workers and in which managers and engineers run the complex planned economy with the help of a giant electronic brain. Psychological research has made possible the most efficient use of human resources: National General Classification Tests are administered and all citizens appear as holes punched in IBM cards and lines drawn on graphs. Those whose I.Q. does not qualify them for advanced education and for jobs as managers and engineers are sent into either the Army for twenty-five years or into the Reclamation and Reconstruction Corps, an organization devoted to such jobs as filling in the holes in the streets. Although life is dull and routine for the ruling elite, it is even more unsatisfying for the ordinary people, who long for some catastrophe like another war so that they can demonstrate their worth and importance. Vonnegut is evidently pleading for the human use of human beings.

But, of course, it is not only on reverse Utopias that science fiction criticizes the quantification of human beings. As we are well aware, probably the most extended attack on this problem to appear anywhere is contained in C. S. Lewis's cosmic trilogy. Science, as Chad Walsh points out, really takes a beating in these three novels: the principal villain of the first two novels is the physicist Weston, and in the third novel there is a whole new set of villains to replace him -- the scientists of the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments. It is in the plans of the N.I.C.E. to create "a new human nature" that Lewis's anxiety that science may be employed to destroy what we know as humanity is most clearly seen. One of the organizers explains the purposes of the Institute:

At first -- sterilization of the unfit, liquidation of the backward races..., selective breeding. Then real education, including pre-natal education. By real education I mean one that has no 'take-it-or-leave-it' nonsense. A real education makes the patient what it wants infallibly: whatever he or his parents try to do about it. Of course, it'll have to be mainly psychological at first. But we'll get on to biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation.

Lewis's fears seem quite similar to Huxley's in Brave New World.

Many would agree that in C. S. Lewis's trilogy science fiction has up to now reached its highest level as literature, an accomplishment which is the result of much more than the vigor of Lewis's attack upon the quantification of human problems. Style,

plot, characterization, theme, and symbolism fit together to form the totality of a truly great work of art. But as important as Lewis's skillful combination of these basic elements of fiction may be, it is his comment on the relationship of science and technology to humanity which most gives permanence to the trilogy. And to me it is quite conceivable that other science fiction novels and stories, less successful as works of art, may also possess permanent value because they too have imaginatively reconsidered the popular idea of progress.

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A Check-List of Articles Dealing with Science Fiction

Thomas D. Clareson
Edward S. Lauterbach

The present selection of articles is the first installment of a cumulative bibliography which will include both popular and scholarly books and articles dealing with science fiction. Since the body of critical studies ranges from introductions to anthologies to full-length books treating individual authors and motifs, the criterion for choosing to include the following items was simply that they were independent articles appearing in American or British periodicals.

Adams, J. Donald. "Speaking of Books," The New York Times Book Review, July 12, 1953, p. 2. The first of two columns devoted to science fiction. Extended comment on Reginald Bretnor's Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Its Future. Notices that the genre is discussed as though H.G. Wells and Jules Verne had never written.

"Speaking of Books," The New York Times Book Review, September 13, 1953, p. 2. He believes that science fiction is deserving of serious attention, that it is not only an escape literature but also a literature "deeply concerned with mankind's present plight and its problematical future." Singles out Bradbury and Clarke for special praise. Notes that its chief weakness is in character creation.

Baring-Gould, William S. "Little Superman, What Now?" Harpers, 193(September 1946), 283-288. Although he suggests that science fiction faces a crisis because "fact" is catching up, he feels that the crisis will produce better writing. However, the greater part of the article is given over to a description of fan meetings and to a discussion of Ray Palmer and the "Shaver Mystery" in Amazing Stories. He judges the latter to be an example of the poorest type science fiction.

Barron, Arthur S. "Why Do Scientists Read Science Fiction?" Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, XIII(February 1957), 62-66. Scientists are attracted to the genre not because of its literary merit, but because it "serves at least three personal functions" for them: 1) It glamorizes them; 2) it expresses their "protest against the use of .. knowledge for anti-human ends;" and 3) it "re-affirms the basic humanistic values of the scientist's creed."

- Bradbury, Ray. "Day After Tomorrow: Why Science Fiction?" Nation, May 2, 1953, pp. 364-367. Bradbury's thesis is that science fiction is the only genre in which philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history may be 'played with' without ruining the work as literature. It creates "outsized images" of the problems that face society.
- Brady, Charles A. "Lunatics and Selenophiles," America, July 26, 1958, pp. 448-449. A discussion of the influence of the moon on literature, with attention to the early moon-voyages of Kepler, Cyrano de Bergerac, Poe, Verne, and Wells.
- Campbell, John W., Jr., "Science-Fiction and the Opinion of the Unwise," Saturday Review, May 12, 1956, 9-10. The "fundamental purpose" of the genre "is to make accurately loose prophecies of general trends," and it should be judged on its merits as a literature of prophecy. Much attention to the case of Cleve Cartmill's "Deadline" in 1944, saying that if it had been published two years later it would have to be judged by standard literary values. To Reisman's three types of men must be added a fourth-- the Universe-Directed type, dominated by the facts of the universe. Uses this concept in a discussion of characterization, suggesting that if characters appear emotionless and authoritarian, it is because the universe is inflexible and the characters simply interpret it.
- Dane, Clemence. "American Fairy Tale," North American Review, 242 (Autumn 1936), 143-152. Whereas Britain looks to the past for its fairy tales, America looks to the future; science fiction, therefore, is "nothing in the world but America's fairy tales." At best the tales are no more than "nonsense," but they do stimulate the imagination. Discusses Astounding, Weird Tales, and Wonder Stories.
- Denney, Reuel. "Reactors of the Imagination," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, IX(July 1953), 206-210. Discussion of the nature of science fiction as literature, stressing the elements of catharsis and shock. Suggests that it expresses an essentially metaphysical symbolism. Gives attention to Ray Bradbury and Frederic Brown as the best of current writers.
- Derleth, August. "Contemporary Science-Fiction," The English Journal XLI(January 1952), 1-8. Sketches the development of the genre from the magazines and specialist houses. Science fiction "embraces all imaginary fiction which grows out of scientific concepts." Gives Charles Fort much credit for stimulating imagination of writers; praises such writers as Bradbury, Heinlein, and van Vogt.

DeVoto, Bernard. "Doom Beyond Jupiter," Harpers, 179(September 1939), 445-448. Highly critical of both the literary quality and content of the genre. Emphasizes the catastrophe motif, pointing out that "It is as if a race drifting helplessly to destruction found itself able to drift more tranquilly" by knowing the inevitability of such disaster on other worlds and from other times. Does not see how the stories could interest scientists.

Fison, Peter. "That Thing From Another World," Twentieth Century, 158(September 1955), 280-288. Asserts that science fiction is taking itself too seriously; laments the loss of its potential for "high adventure which used to be the novel's birthright in Dumas." Certain narrow categories and certain pessimistic themes have now become stylish. Praises Bradbury as a literary artist and Sprague deCamp as a humorist.

Gibbs, Angelica. "Onward and Upward with the Arts: Inertrum, Neutronium, Chromaloy, P-P-P-Prut," New Yorker, February 13, 1943, 36ff. A survey of the field, emphasizing the fan conventions and the low prices paid to authors. States that the first science fiction story was published in Modern Electrics in April 1911. Criticizes both Gernsback and Burroughs.

Glass, Bentley. "The Scientist in Contemporary Fiction," The Scientific Monthly, 85(December 1957), 288-293. After dismissing much of science fiction and all "whodunits" because in them the scientist is merely a device to move the plot, Glass concentrates upon two portraits of the scientist in fiction: that typified by Wells and the scientific Utopias and that typified by Sinclair Lewis's Arrowsmith. With few exceptions, however, there does not "appear to be any profound understanding of science itself" nor of the scientist. The writers must "somehow have acquired an appreciation of the prevailing outlook of the scientist upon life and of the methods and spirit of science itself." One value of the article lies in the breadth of its illustrations from both American and English literature.

Hillegas, Mark. R. "The First Invasions From Mars," Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review (February 1960), 107-112. A discussion of Kurd Lasswitz's Auf Zwei Planeten, and Wells's The War of the Worlds. Credits the impetus for interest in Mars to Schiaparelli's announcement in 1877 of his discovery of the canals of Mars.

Hirsch, Walter. "Science Fiction ... A Study," Scope, XIII(October 1959), 12ff. Emphasizes the element of prophecy in that one of the chief functions of the genre is to recognize trends and attempt to control them. An analysis of content is the most valid approach to science fiction. Makes such an analysis based upon some 300 stories published in American magazines between 1926 and 1950. The writers support a democratic society but do not indicate how democratic ideals can be preserved under present, technological society. Scientists are presented as a favored elite group in imaginary future societies.

Holcomb, Claire. "The Science-Fiction Phenomenon in Literature," Saturday Review of Literature, May 28, 1949, pp. 9-10. Presents an historical sketch of the genre going back to the seventeenth century, emphasizing Wells and Verne. Mentions the recent development of "philosophical science fiction," citing Huxley and Stapledon. Sees the genre as "a tonic to the imagination" which prepares "hearts and minds to find and accept .. whatever answers there may be."

Kostolefsky, Joseph. "Science, Yes -- Fiction, Maybe," Antioch Review, 13(June 1953), 236-240. Attacks the idea that science fiction has reached its maturity because it treats grand ideas; demands literary excellence. He points out its similarity to the proletarian literature of twenty years ago in the sense that the characters are created by their environment; he accuses it of being esoteric because every "flight" is "an ascent to the upper reaches of scientific theory."

Lovell, A. C. B. "A Counterblast to Science Fiction," The New Statesman and Nation, XLVII(March 1954), 319-320. Basing his article on some fifty titles-- mostly American -- published in England during the year and using Philip Latham's The Xi Effect as his chief example, he denounces the genre. "...protracted reading is a nightmare effort." Dislikes the pessimism of the writers.

Mandel, Siegfried and Peter Fingesten. "The Myth of Science Fiction," Saturday Review, August 27, 1955, pp. 7-8. Modern science fiction expresses man's desire to escape all confinement-- political, sociological, and personal reality-- to a place/condition where "all is simple machines and clean space." It creates a mythology that is a counterpart of the cults created by primitive man. It contains "little overt sexuality," because it emphasizes an "intellectual feeling a la Plato." The science fiction ruler symbolizes a kind of "Big Fatherhood." Basically humanistic doctrines underlie the genre, in which there has been a point by point exchange of old religious values for modern concepts.

Methold, Kenneth. "Science Fiction," Contemporary Review (March 1959), pp. 170-173. Although reviewers and critics give little attention to science fiction, its best stories and novels "compare favourably" with much that is best in contemporary fiction. At its best science fiction portrays the reactions of characters to problems which, although projected into the future, portray the relationship of man to his changing environment. It should no longer be considered a novelty, but should receive the attention "any serious and competent" fiction deserves.

Michaelson, L. W. "Social Criticism in Science Fiction," Antioch Review, 14(December 1954), 502-508. Cites John W. Campbell's analysis of the genre (The Best of Science Fiction, Crown, 1946) into three divisions: prophecy, philosophy, and adventure. Emphasizes that the best writers use the genre as a vehicle for social protest, and notes the recent unfavorable reaction of the critics because of the pessimism of the stories.

Mitchell, Stephen O. "Alien Vision: The Techniques of Science Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 4(Winter 1958-1959), 346-356. Science fiction is similar to early realism and naturalism in that it presents a vision of an alien universe "that we do not know and would not like." So far as technique is concerned, the science fiction writer must rely upon many of the devices necessary to the realist, particularly the massing of detail and the creation of some believable framework (frame of reference). As a result, the genre, as a body, suffers from a repetition of the same devices, especially the frame of reference, that lead to technical monotony. This is the dilemma that mars science fiction. Merritt's Moon Pool and Howard's Conan the Conqueror are named as typical examples of science fiction.

Olney, Clark. "Edgar Allan Poe-- Science-Fiction Pioneer," The Georgia Review, 4(Winter 1958), 416-421. Although Poe was not the first to write science fiction, he must be recognized as one of its outstanding pioneers because he based his stories "firmly on a rational kind of extrapolation, avoiding the supernatural. This has proved to be the underlying convention of science fiction."

Pierce, John R. "Science and Literature," Science, April 20, 1951, pp. 431-434. Asserts that science fiction in its so-called maturity goes beyond the presentation of ideas and 'gadgets' to the study of their effect upon man. Finds a lack of scientific ideas in the stories and blames John W. Campbell, Jr. for starting the "deterioration of the hard scientific and technological core" of science fiction. Praises Arrowsmith for its treatment of science and the scientist.

Pratt, Fletcher. "Science Fiction and Fantasy -- 1949," Saturday Review of Literature, December 24, 1949, pp. 7-9. A commentary upon the titles released during the year. Points out that any theme may be discussed by the writers. Praises Orwell's 1984, but finds Stapledon's Worlds of Wonder "wordy and complicated." Suggests that science fiction will replace the detective story as the popular form of escape literature.

Priestley, J. B. "They Came From Inner Space," New Statesman and Nation, December 5, 1953, pp. 712-714. Although he dismisses space opera and stories centering upon gadgets as worthless, and names their writers "the cybernetics public relations team" because of their general praise of science, he does find a third type of science fiction with literary merit. These are the "future nightmares" typified by Bradbury. As a genre, science fiction is important because it "shows what is happening to the human mind." The genre expresses the anxiety, fear, and guilt which trouble man; the unconscious is protesting.

Scholl, Ralph. "Science Fiction: A Selected Check-List," Bulletin of Bibliography, XXII(January-April 1958), pp. 114-115. The most complete bibliography of secondary studies to appear in a periodical. He defines science fiction as "that imaginative fiction which is the result of extrapolations that take into account the so-called natural laws." No science fiction titles are listed.

Simon, Frank. "Plot for an Epoch," Saturday Review of Literature, December 31, 1949, p. 23. A letter to the editor mentioning a number of stories employing the "theme of using a common enemy to unite the world."

"Utopias You Wouldn't Like," Harpers, 210(April 1955), 87-88. Part of the "Mr. Harper After Hours Column." Suggests that science fiction has turned against science. At the time of Wells and Gernsback, the stories were essentially Utopian, and the writers "were the advance guards of a materialist's millenium." Focusing upon the third issue of Ballantine Star Science Fiction Stories, in which nine of ten tales are anti-science, the writer asserts, "Obviously each of these is not adventure fiction but social satire, edged with bitterness against the science-minded society of today, let alone tomorrow."

H. P. Lovecraft as a Mythmaker

Winfred S. Emmons, Jr.

Myth is supposed to grow out of a current pattern of life, taking form in stories which crystallize beliefs that are a part of that life. The twentieth century is not notoriously an age of beliefs, and its approach to myth has tended rather to autopsy and analysis than to mythic creation. H. P. Lovecraft, however, has achieved a certain fame as the creator of the "Cthulhu Mythos," which in some sense may be considered a myth for our time. Three current beliefs are incorporated into the stories of the Cthulhu mythos, and it is the purpose of this paper to present a skeletal account of their use in Lovecraft's stories.

Determinism is perhaps one of the most prevalent ideas of the twentieth century; stemming from Democritus and receiving reinforcement from Calvinistic theology, it is widely accepted today as a concomitant of materialism. The control exerted over the minds of men by Cthulhu and other deities of the Lovecraft pantheon, as in "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," is an obvious manifestation of puppet-master determinism; and the mythic quality stems from these stories being tales of gods. This kind of determinism, or control, is pretty clearly a development of an idea stated in Charles Fort's Book of the Damned, as follows:

I suspect that, after all, we're useful -- that among contesting claimants adjustment has occurred, or that something now has a legal right to us, by force, or by having paid out analogies of beads for us to former, more primitive owners of us -- all others warned off-- that this has been known, perhaps for ages, to certain ones upon this earth, a cult or order, members of which function like bellwethers to the rest of us, or as superior slaves or overseers, directing us in accordance with instructions received -- from Somewhere else -- in our mysterious usefulness.

This idea could, of course, be interpreted in terms of orthodox Christianity, but orthodox Christianity is unfashionable. The attitude most commonly expressed in Lovecraft's stories toward this idea is rather close to the modish pessimism characteristic of the mid-twentieth century. Mythically, the idea gains force by being expressed in terms of malevolent personality rather than in the abstract.

So much for simple determinism as incorporated into the Cthulhu mythos. Another attitude of the twentieth century, still common but seldom emphasized, has been part of the heritage of mankind from the beginning: fear of the unknown and mysterious.

Control of unknown forces has traditionally been the province of the magician or witch, and though outright belief in witchcraft and magic is seldom admitted, an inordinate number of books on these subjects and on occultism in general manage to get published. Furthermore, the old idea that some kinds of knowledge are forbidden has been re-emphasized, and the prospect of mankind's being punished for learning too much, through atomic warfare, is not unknown. The Necronomicon and the wizards who make use of it, intending thereby the destruction of mankind and the enthronement of the Great Old Ones, may be more easily related to experience in this decade and the 1940's than they were to the time in which Lovecraft actually wrote his stories. The witch, or magician, in Lovecraft, however, is never the perpetrator of petty mischief who figures so large in the witch-trials; he is the worshiper of alien gods, and an active menace to mankind as a whole. Although Lovecraft draws on Margaret Murray's concept of witchcraft as a fertility cult, there is never any fertility motif in the doings of his witches, who are really more magicians than witches, anyway.

Although the Lovecraft magician makes use of incantation and ritual, he is commonly a mathematician as well; as a mathematician he is always involved in popularized Einsteinian relativity. As best I can make out, however, Lovecraft made little use of Einstein directly, but rather found his material in such works as P. D. Ouspensky's Tertium Organum, a popularized treatment of hyperdimensional concepts which was first published in 1914; it is subtitled "A Key to the Enigmas of the World." In this work are found two elements which Lovecraft used: attempts to conceive a universe in terms of extra dimensions, and a unified concept of being, which involves the annihilation of space. Lovecraft also dispenses with time, but this is a refinement on Ouspensky:

Four-dimensional space, if we try to imagine it to ourselves, will be the infinite repetition of our infinite three-dimensional sphere, as a line is the infinite repetition of a point.

This idea is developed by Lovecraft into a unifying factor that brings together the many vague references to hyperspatial being scattered throughout the entire Cthulhu mythos; these he uses evocatively in producing the "cosmic fear" which is the hallmark of a Lovecraft story. Ouspensky's concept is developed in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," in which the ultimate experience of the protagonist, John Carter, consists of the realization that all that surrounds him, including all personality, is part of himself and coexistent with all time and space.

It was an All-In-One and One-In-All of limitless being and self -- not merely a thing of one space-time continuum, but allied to the ultimate animating essence of existence's whole unbounded

sweep -- the last, utter sweep which has no confines and which outreaches fancy and mathematics alike.

This All-In-One, the story says, is perhaps "that which is worshiped by certain earthly cults as Yog-Sothoth."

In this final unification, determinism becomes merely an aspect of unified being and may be considered as the one underlying theme of the Cthulhu mythos. If Lovecraft himself said so, however, I am unaware of it. It is, of course, better not to think of an underlying theme when reading the stories of the Cthulhu mythos, because in this ultimate concept, cosmic fear does not exist, being only the product of limited minds which can view the unfamiliar only in terms of alien and hostile personality.

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The Countdown

Science fiction readers are in for a new experience when they encounter Nigel Kneale's The Quatermass Experiment and Quatermass II (Penguin Books), even though both are essentially space opera. These are the scripts of the TV serials which the BBC produced in the summer of 1953 and autumn of 1955, respectively. Perhaps some will object to the lack of description and background, particularly in the former, for the latter does have more extended prose links. Both concern themselves with 'invasions by aliens; the first is perhaps more original in that the aliens arrive on earth by 'inhabiting' the three survivors of the first space-flight. (The first, incidentally, either as a tape of the TV shows or as an adaptation, has circulated in the U.S. as a movie.)

An attractive new edition of Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines has been released by Puffin Books (PS 111), as have editions of E. Nesbit's Five Children and It (PS 128) and The Story of the Amulet (PS 130). No more attractive or curious a creature exists in all of fantasy than Passmmead -- the "It" discovered by the children.

Sarban's The Sound of His Horn (Ballantine Books) deserves the high praise it has generally received. Mordecai Roshwald's Level 7 outlines a terrible "new map of hell" and ends on a nice point of irony, but lacks development and literary merit. It reads like an essay or, as suggested, an outline. Incidentally, while C. S. Forester's "If Hitler Had Invaded England" (Saturday Evening Post, April 16, 23, 30) parallels Level 7 in being more an essay than a story, it does serve as a good illustration of the basic technique of science fiction. Forester simply manipulates facts that have been established and extrapolates from them.

A Motif Index for Science Fiction?

S. J. Sackett

Any folklorist is familiar with the Motif-Index of Folk Literature, by Stith Thompson. This proceeds upon the assumption that any story can be analyzed into a number of elements called "motifs" (e.g. X1122.2. Lie: person shoots many animals with one shot; K134.5. Owner trades a blind horse and gives a description that is literally correct; E235.4.5. Return from dead to punish theft of skull) and arranges the motifs into a logical order, with cross-references to various collections of myths, folktales, and legends. Thus a scholar who is interested in a tale containing one of these motifs can, by using the Index, compare his tale with perhaps hundreds of others and be led to certain conclusions about the history and diffusion of his tale as well as about the processes of change and alteration that a story undergoes in the oral tradition. There is also a "Type Index," by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, which deals with certain Märchen or folktales as units. I think the principle of a motif index might well be applied to science fiction; a "Motif Index of Science Fiction" would be a valuable aid to future scholars.

Moreover, a "Type Index" used alone or in combination with a motif index might help solve the problem of defining science fiction. Someone once said that there was no such thing as Romanticism; there were, instead, romanticisms. Part of the trouble of defining science fiction is that the same thing is true of science fiction. Perhaps we should admit that we cannot arrive at a one-sentence definition at all, but instead should define the various types of stories that the term includes -- the Utopian novel, the voyage imaginaire, the space opera, for example -- and then simply say that "science fiction" is a term which, for the sake of convenience, we apply to such-and-such types. We might remind ourselves that no one-sentence formula (e.g. "emotion recollected in tranquillity" or "the rhythmical creation of beauty") adequately describes the poetry of such diverse writers as Donne (neither tranquil nor rhythmical in the Romantic sense), Pope (neither emotional nor beautiful in the Romantic sense), Wordsworth, Poe, and Eliot (whom Wordsworth and Poe would have found lacking in emotion, tranquillity, rhythm, and beauty, all four). The best we can do, really, is to say that "poetry" is a convenient inclusive term to comprehend all individual poems and then go on to deal with the poems themselves. I am in favor of confessing that the same situation exists with respect to science fiction and saving ourselves much time, energy, and heated argument. We could then, for one thing, turn to the types of stories to be included. A "Type Index" would then prove invaluable.

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